SI: IDEOLOGY, REALPOLITIK, AND HISTORICAL MEMORY: CHINA'S PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES IN ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH NON-SOCIALIST COUNTRIES DURING THE COLD WAR, 1949–1972

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE ON IDEOLOGY, REALPOLITIK, AND HISTORICAL MEMORY: CHINA'S PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES IN ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH NON-SOCIALIST COUNTRIES DURING THE COLD WAR, 1949–1972

1. *Introduction*

Existing studies of Chinese diplomatic negotiation have concentrated primarily on Sino-American talks, especially those conducted from the early 1970s onward. This emphasis has encouraged broad conclusions about Chinese negotiating behavior derived from a relatively narrow bilateral relationship.[1] American

[1] Four of these studies are worth mentioning. First, based mainly on published documents and newspapers, Kenneth Young provided a detailed account of Sino-American ambassadorial talks through 1967. See Kenneth Young, *Negotiating with the Chinese Communists: The United States Experience, 1953–1967*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968. Second, Alfred D. Wilhelm's study of Chinese negotiating style and characteristics during the Korean Armistice talks and the Geneva talks, published in 1994, is also an important addition to understanding the Chinese mindset and strategies. See Alfred S. Wilhelm, *The Chinese at the Negotiating Table*: *Style and Characteristics*. Washington D.C.: National Defense University, 1994. Third, having served on the National Security Council, with much experience at operational levels, Richard Solomon produced an authoritative study on Chinese diplomatic negotiations with the United States. Originally published by the RAND Corporation, but later updated, Solomon's volume on *Chinese Negotiating Behavior* assessed the "unique" aspects of Chinese negotiating behavior as perceived by the American officials who encountered the Chinese since the 1970s. Richard H. Solomon, *Chinese Negotiating Behavior: Pursuing Interests through "Old Friends."* Washington D. C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1999; Four, premised on both declassified Chinese and English sources, Yafeng Xia's 2006 book provides a historical study of the Chinese-American de-facto diplomatic talks from 1949 to 1972, but its main focus is not the Chinese negotiating mindset and strategies *per se*. See Yafeng Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949–1972*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006.

journalist Peter Martin, for example, argues that Zhou Enlai "established a diplomatic corps based on the idea of a 'civilian army'—a culture that still endures today, more than seventy years after the founding of the People's Republic." Martin emphasizes that many of the PRC's first diplomats were senior military officers selected for their political loyalty, despite their limited diplomatic experience and foreign-language training.[2] His study offers a valuable institutional history, but its emphasis on the persistence of a militarized diplomatic culture leaves less room for the variation, adaptation, and compromise visible in negotiations with different categories of states.

This Special Issue therefore asks two related questions: How did the leaders of the People's Republic of China (PRC) construct a new diplomatic establishment, and how did its principles and negotiating practices evolve under changing Cold War conditions? The six articles examine relations with Burma, India, Italy, Peru, Japan, and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Together, these cases span the PRC's first two major phases of diplomatic expansion: its early engagement with neighboring postcolonial states in 1949–1950 and its rapprochement with Western and non-socialist powers in the early 1970s. They thus provide a structured comparison across regions, political systems, and international contexts rather than a comprehensive survey of every country that established relations with Beijing.

The broader historical examples discussed in this Introduction—including the Soviet Union, Indonesia, Britain, Finland, France, and the United States—serve a contextual and comparative purpose. They are not additional case studies, nor do they enlarge the formal scope of the Special Issue beyond its six articles. Instead, they identify the wider repertoire of procedures and policy choices against which the six cases can be interpreted: establishment of relations by an exchange of notes, protracted preliminary negotiations, relations at the chargé d'affaires level, and selective flexibility over Taiwan and the one-China principle. The Introduction therefore uses these examples to define the range of possible diplomatic practices, while the six articles supply the issue's principal archival evidence and sustained analysis. The conclusions advanced here are correspondingly comparative and suggestive; they do not claim that six cases exhaust the diversity of the PRC's relations with all non-socialist countries between 1949 and 1972.

The articles are: Zhi Liang and Youfeng Wang, "Near But Not Dear: Burma's Recognition of New China and the Origins of Contemporary Sino-Burmese

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[2] Peter Martin, *China's Civilian Army: The Making of Wolf Warrior Diplomacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 15–16, 49.

Relations"; Bin Duan, "Sino-Indian Diplomatic Recognition and Establishment of Relations in the Global Cold War Context, 1947–1950"; Rui Zhang, "Italy and the Recognition of the People's Republic of China during the Cold War"; Kun Zhang, "Study on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between China and Peru, 1971–1972"; Xianfen Xu, "The 1972 System: Negotiating the Normalization of Sino-Japanese Relations"; and Jun Ge and Rongting Wu, "Utilizing the Right Wing for a United Front: Negotiations for the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the PRC and the FRG in 1972." Written by senior and mid-career Chinese historians, the articles recover Chinese perceptions and concerns while placing them in bilateral and international contexts.

Employing an international-history approach, the contributors draw on Chinese sources—especially materials from the Chinese Foreign Ministry archives that remain underused in English-language scholarship—as well as Russian, Burmese, Indian, Japanese, German, Spanish-language, Italian, and English-language primary and secondary sources. They examine how Beijing used diplomatic negotiations to pursue foreign-policy objectives and how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs translated broad political directives into negotiating positions. Taken together, the articles trace both continuity and change in Chinese diplomatic practices from 1949 to 1972 and assess the relative weight of ideology, realpolitik, and historical memory.

2. *New China's Diplomacy*[3]*: Historical Context*

On 1 October 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Chairman Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the PRC in Beijing. The new government declared itself "the sole legitimate government representing all the people of the People's Republic of China" and expressed its willingness to establish diplomatic relations with any government prepared to observe "the principles

[3] In modern times, China suffered from domestic strife and foreign aggression, and had fallen into the crisis of national subjugation and genocide. The concept of "New China" was first proposed by late Qing reformist leader Kang Youwei. From the very beginning, the concept of "New China" corresponded to the "Old China" in modern times. After the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921, the CCP soon began to think and explore about building a New China. Wang Yuling, "Late Qing Intellectuals' Conception of 'New China'," *Qingshi yanjiu* (The Qing History Journal), no. 4 (2013), pp. 67–68; Zhang Xudong, "The evolution of the Chinese Communist Party's 'New China' discourse system," *Renmin luntan* (People's Forum), no. 15 (2019), pp. 92–94.

of equality, mutual benefit, and mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty."[4]

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was officially established the same day. At its opening ceremony on 8 November, Premier and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai acknowledged that, although the CCP had experience dealing with foreign powers, diplomacy as a specialized field was new to the Party. In "On New China's Diplomacy," he divided diplomatic work into two broad tasks: establishing fraternal ties with the Soviet Union and the people's democracies, and opposing imperialism. Yet this binary framework allowed tactical flexibility. China might differ with socialist allies on particular issues and cooperate with an imperialist state when circumstances required it. Diplomacy, in Zhou's formulation, combined unity and struggle.[5] As the historian Chen Jian has observed, Mao and his colleagues also conceived the PRC as a "revolutionary state" committed to dismantling the "old world" that had subjected China to foreign domination and national humiliation.[6]

As the PRC entered multilateral diplomacy, Zhou Enlai translated these broad principles into a more nuanced professional practice. On the eve of the 1954 Geneva Conference, he told the Chinese delegation:

"Although we have experience in domestic negotiations and disputes with the Americans in the past—situations that were wild, chaotic, and without rules—there was little to fear. A falling out wouldn't have had serious consequences. Of course, we didn't negotiate just to provoke conflict. Our negotiations then were limited in scope, and we could say whatever we wanted. But now, as we step onto the international stage as a major power, we must approach diplomacy more formally, like performing a literary opera. While martial elements exist in literary opera, it is ultimately a refined performance, a staged act. At the Geneva Conference, we'll be engaging with several fraternal

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[4] Luo Yisu, "The First Diplomatic Operation after the Founding of New China," in Jiang Qinzheng, chief ed., *Xin Zhongguo waijiao fengyun* (Winds and Clouds in New China's Diplomacy) (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1999), vol. 5, p. 29.

[5] Zhou Enlai, "On New China's Diplomacy," 8 November 1949, in Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaobu and Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., *Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan* (Selected Works of Zhou Enlai on Diplomacy) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2000, 2nd ed.), pp. 1–3.

[6] Chen Jian, "Linking 'Revolution' with 'Decolonization': The Rise of the 'Bandung Discourse' in China's Foreign Policy and the Variation of Themes in the Global Cold War." *Lengzhan guojishi yanjiu* (Cold War International History Studies), vol. 9 (2010), (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe), pp. 2, 3.

countries. We must cooperate, be precise, and stay in harmony. This is our first performance, so we must remain in the spirit of learning."[7]

To help the delegation perform this "literary opera with martial elements," Zhou even instructed each member to prepare both a gray Western-style suit and a Chinese tunic suit.[8] The theatrical metaphor and attention to appearance captured a central feature of early PRC diplomacy: ideological principle and political struggle coexisted with discipline, adaptation, and tactical accommodation. The same combination shaped negotiations with non-socialist states.

3. *System of Negotiations before Establishing Diplomatic Relations*

Following a regime change, foreign governments may recognize the new government and formalize relations through an exchange of diplomatic communications. The PRC developed a more demanding procedure for many non-socialist states: it accepted recognition but ordinarily required negotiations before establishing full diplomatic relations.[9]

Within two months of the PRC's founding, ten countries, predominantly communist states in Eastern Europe and Asia, had recognized the new regime. At an earlier Politburo meeting in January 1949, Zhou Enlai had emphasized that the CCP must pursue a new form of diplomacy, one marked by revolutionary spirit and high aspirations, distinct from the diplomacy of the Nationalist government.[10] Determined to bury the "diplomacy of humiliation" that had plagued China for over a century, the new regime resolved to "set up a new kitchen" to build its diplomatic corps. By November 1950, the PRC had established diplomatic relations with twelve European countries, including the

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[7] Xiong Huayuan, "Chronicle of Zhou Enlai's attendance at the Geneva Conference," *Dangde wenxian* (Literature of the Chinese Communist Party), no. 2 (2024), p. 77; Li Yaping, "Zhou Enlai's Diplomatic Art at the Geneva Conference," *Dangshi zongheng* (Survey of Party History), no. 6 (2010), p. 5.

[8] Xiong Huayuan, "Chronicle of Zhou Enlai's attendance at the Geneva Conference," p. 77; Li Yaping, "Zhou Enlai's Diplomatic Art at the Geneva Conference," p. 5.

[9] Pei Monong, *Zhou Enlai yu Xin Zhongguo waijiao* (Zhou Enlai and New China's Diplomacy) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 2000), p. 89. Also, Dangdai Zhongguo Congshu Bianjibu, ed., *Dangdai Zhongguo waijiao* (Contemporary Chinese Diplomacy) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1988), pp. 7–14.

[10] Jin Chongji, et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1898–1949* (The Chronicle of Zhou Enlai, 1898–1949) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian and renmin chubanshe, 1989), p. 804.

Soviet Union and the East European socialist states, and with six neighboring Asian countries. This constituted the first wave of diplomatic recognition. By the end of 1955, twenty-three countries had established formal relations with Beijing.[11]

Why did PRC leaders insist on negotiations before establishing diplomatic relations with non-socialist countries? Former diplomat and scholar Pei Monong located the answer in the unresolved contest with Jiang Jieshi's GMD government in Taiwan, which continued to claim sovereignty over all China and retained China's seat at the United Nations. Beijing feared that relations established without explicit understandings on representation and Taiwan might legitimize "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan." Its policy of "setting up a new kitchen" therefore rejected automatic succession to the GMD's diplomatic relationships and required new relations to be established on a fresh basis. This approach contrasted with that of the post-1911 government, which had sought rapid foreign recognition by inheriting existing diplomatic relations.[12] As Zhou Enlai explained, "Our diplomatic relations with foreign countries must be based on equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect for territorial sovereignty. This is something that the old Chinese government has not done for more than a hundred years."[13]

Zhou Enlai categorized countries seeking to establish diplomatic relations with New China into three groups: the first was the Soviet Union and various people's democratic countries (i.e., socialist bloc countries); the second was imperialist countries (such as the United States and Britain); the third was capitalist countries (such as Sweden and Denmark) and former colonial and semi-colonial countries, which were later called nationalist countries or the Third World countries (such as India, Burma, Indonesia, Peru, etc.).[14] Departing from traditional diplomatic practices, the PRC required negotiations as a prerequisite for establishing formal diplomatic relations with non-socialist countries, aiming to implement diplomatic ideals of independence, equality, mutual benefit, and mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. In practice, the PRC adopted different tactics depending on the timing and the country involved.

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[11] Dangdai Zhongguo Congshu Bianjibu, ed., *Dangdai Zhongguo waijiao*, p. 134.

[12] Pei, *Zhou Enlai yu Xin Zhongguo waijiao*, p. 89.

[13] Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaobu and Zhonggong Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, eds., *Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan*, p. 49.

[14] Li Ping, et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976* (The Chronicles of Zhou Enlai, 1949–1976), (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian and renmin chubanshe, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 646–48.

While it generally insisted on severing diplomatic ties with Taiwan as a condition for establishing relations, this requirement was occasionally waived.

The resulting procedure was not uniform. The Soviet Union and ten other socialist states recognized the PRC during its first year and established relations through exchanges of diplomatic communications without preliminary negotiations. Among non-socialist states, however, the pattern varied. Burma was the first postcolonial Asian state to recognize the PRC and became an early test of Beijing's preference for negotiations before formal relations, as Zhi Liang and Youfeng Wang demonstrate. Indonesia established relations through an exchange of notes without negotiations. India was the first non-socialist state to conduct formal negotiations and then establish relations with the PRC, the process examined by Bin Duan. Negotiations with Britain proved more complex: the two countries established relations only at the chargé d'affaires level in 1954 and did not exchange ambassadors until 1972. Finland, by contrast, had neither diplomatic relations with the GMD government nor UN membership, and it therefore established relations with Beijing without negotiations.[15] These examples provide comparative reference points for the detailed Burma and India case studies; they do not constitute separate studies in this Special Issue.

Although China and India differed in political systems, the PRC valued its relationship with its southern neighbor. Indian Premier Jawaharlal Nehru "had an almost romantic attachment to" China, and "there was both sympathy for the Chinese revolution and a practical recognition that India was going to have to do business with whatever regime came to power in its massive northeastern neighbor."[16] Thus, India recognized the PRC on 30 December 1949, and was the first country to send a delegation to Beijing to negotiate on the issue of establishing formal diplomatic relations with the PRC. The PRC's conditions for establishing diplomatic relations with nationalist and capitalist countries were as follows: withdrawal of recognition of the Chinese Nationalist government; recognition of the PRC as the sole legal government of China; recognition of Taiwan as an inalienable part of the PRC; support for the PRC's membership at the UN. After six rounds of negotiations between vice foreign minister Zhang Hanfu and A. K. Sen, acting as chargé d'affaires but formerly

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[15] Pei, *Zhou Enlai yu Xin Zhongguo waijiao*, p. 90.

[16] Rena Fonseca, "Nehru and the Diplomacy of Nonalignment," in Gordon A. Craig and Francis L. Loewenheim, eds., *The Diplomats, 1939–979* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 384.

first secretary at the Indian embassy in Nanjing,[17] the PRC and India established formal diplomatic relations on 1 April 1950, and agreed to exchange ambassadors.[18]

Yet Beijing did not apply these conditions with complete consistency. Indonesia and the PRC established relations through an exchange of notes in April 1950 without bilateral negotiations. In 1964, Beijing did not require France to break relations with Taiwan before recognizing the PRC and did not insist that the joint communiqué identify the PRC as China's "sole legitimate government"; instead, China placed its interpretation in private understandings and public statements. In 1978, it again accepted ambiguity, this time over U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, during negotiations on Sino-American normalization. These broader examples clarify the boundaries of Beijing's diplomatic repertoire and underscore a question central to the six case studies: under what conditions did ideology and the one-China principle yield to strategic and geopolitical considerations? Across the cases, adherence to principle and tactical flexibility were not opposites but interacting elements of diplomatic practice, shaped in part by changes in the triangular relationship among China, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

Recent scholarship has used archives from China and its diplomatic partners to recover previously obscured aspects of the PRC's negotiations. Chinese Communist Party historian Zhang Mianli interprets negotiation before recognition as an innovation through which Mao Zedong linked China's pursuit of independence, equality, and respect to international law. Mao played a central role in the negotiations with India and Britain and identified three issues to be resolved: the foreign government must sever relations with the GMD regime; clarify its position on the PRC's UN representation; and determine the disposition of GMD institutions and Chinese state assets within its jurisdiction. Together, these requirements helped define what became the one-China

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[17] K. M. Panikka, *In Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomats* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1955), p. 69; Li Danan, "The Diplomatist Zhang Hanfu," *Renwu* (Biographical Studies), no. 6 (2002), p. 7

[18] Dangdai Zhongguo Congshu Bianjibu, ed., *Dangdai Zhongguo waijiao*, pp. 9–11; Wang Junyan, *Kaiguo waijiao* (Diplomacy at the Early Years of the Foundation of the State) (Beijing: Shishi chubanshe, 1999), pp. 509–510; Pei Monong, "Yuan Zhongxian: Ambassador Plenipotentiary to the Sub-continent–New China's First Generation of Diplomats," in Fu Hao and Li Tongcheng eds., *Kaiqi Guomen: Waijiaoguan fenchai* (Opening the Door of the Country: Diplomat's Elegant Demeanor) (Beijing: Zhongguo huaqiao chubanshe, 1995), p. 306.

principle.[19] Chinese Communist Party historian Guo Weiwei similarly emphasizes Zhou Enlai's role in creating and implementing this system. As premier and foreign minister, Zhou participated in nearly all of the PRC's negotiations to establish diplomatic relations between 1949 and 1975.[20] Building on this scholarship, the six articles move beyond a leader-centered account by reconstructing how policy was interpreted, contested, and adjusted in distinct bilateral negotiations.

4. *Findings*

The six case studies make three principal contributions to the history of PRC foreign relations and to our understanding of the institutional culture of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

First, they demonstrate the importance of historical memory. Determined to end the "diplomacy of humiliation" associated with China's encounters with imperialist powers, CCP leaders insisted that new relations be negotiated on the basis of formal equality. Memories of the "century of humiliation" made Mao reluctant to seek recognition at the price of inherited inequalities. The PRC's Asian neighbors brought their own historical memories to the negotiating table, including concerns about earlier hierarchical relations with China. Ideological affinity could temporarily suppress historical grievances but could not erase them. The Sino-Burmese relationship provides a telling example. Ideological differences and the long-unresolved boundary between the two countries intensified Burma's negative historical memories of the former tributary relationship. Together, these three factors temporarily constrained the U Nu government's pursuit of its practical national interests. Paradoxically, however, in the specific context of establishing Sino-Burmese diplomatic relations, it was precisely this combination of ideological divergence, geopolitical

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[19] Zhang Mianli, "Mao Zedong and the Inauguration of New China's Policy of Negotiating to Establish Diplomatic Relations with Other Countries," *Dangdai Zhongguoshi yanjiu* (Contemporary China History Studies), vol. 14, no. 2 (March 2007), pp. 87–93. Also see Chen Dunde, *Xinzhongguo waijiao tanpan* (New China's Diplomatic Negotiations) (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2011), pp. 60–64.

[20] Guo Weiwei, "Zhou Enlai and New China's Policy of Negotiations for Establishing Diplomatic Relations with Other Countries," *Mao Zedong sixiang yanjiu* (Mao Zedong Thought Study), vol. 27, no.1 (2010), pp. 85–89; Zhang Ying and Pan Jianguo, *Gaoduan juece: Zhou Enlai yu Xin Zhongguo waijiao* (High-level decision-making: Zhou Enlai and New China's Diplomacy) (Haerbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 2018), pp. 15–24.

considerations, and negative historical memory that made Burma apprehensive about China—and consequently led it to decide at an early stage to recognize the future Chinese Communist government.

Second, the articles reveal a recurrent interaction between publicly asserted principles and negotiating flexibility. Official statements often addressed domestic constituencies and foreign allies as well as the government across the table; they therefore did not always define Beijing's final bargaining position. In the negotiations with Japan, for example, China initially adopted an uncompromising posture but ultimately made significant accommodations to secure normalization, as Xianfen Xu shows. The other cases likewise indicate that apparently rigid principles could be sequenced, rephrased, or implemented through tacit understandings when broader objectives required compromise.

Third, the timing and form of diplomatic normalization reflected changes in both the international system and China's foreign strategy. Scholars commonly identify three waves: the early PRC period, the mid-1950s, and the early 1970s.[21] During the first, China's "lean-to-one-side" policy and revolutionary diplomacy facilitated rapid relations with socialist states, while the Burma and India cases tested procedures for dealing with non-socialist neighbors. In the mid-1950s, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence supported expanded relations with newly independent Asian and African countries. In the early 1970s, the perceived Soviet threat and the reconfiguration of triangular relations among Beijing, Moscow, and Washington encouraged rapprochement with non-socialist powers, in particular, advanced capitalist countries. The articles on Italy, Peru, Japan, and the FRG illuminate this third wave from four different regional and political perspectives. Britain, France, and the United States remain important contextual comparisons, but they fall outside the Special Issue's six sustained case studies.

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[21] See Yu Fuzeng, *Gaige kaifang 30 nian laihua liuxuesheng jiaoyu: 1978–2008* (The Education of Foreign Students in China in 30 Years of Reform and Opening-up: 1978–2008) (Beijing: Beijing yuyan daxue chubanshe, 2009), pp. 2–9; Zhang Mianli, "The confirmation of the basic connotation of the one-China principle in the early days of the foundation of New China," *Dangdai Zhongguoshi yanjiu*, no. 4 (2021), p. 79; Shi Chongquan, " Zhou Enlai and the Geneva Conference and the Bandung Asian-African Conference-Commemorating the 125th anniversary of Zhou Enlai's birth," *Mao Zedong sixiang yanjiu* (Studies on Mao Zedong Thought), no. 2 (2023), pp. 55–56; Li Qianyu, "The International United Front for Peace and China's Policy towards the Bandung Conference", *Zhonggong lishi yu lilun yanjiu* (Studies on the CCP's History and Theory) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2015), p. 172; Su Ge, "The great historical journey of China's diplomacy," *Guoji wenti yanjiu* (International Studies), no. 5 (2017), pp. 3–6.

Taken together, the articles show that PRC diplomatic practice cannot be reduced either to ideological rigidity or to pragmatic realpolitik. Historical memory shaped the language and purposes of negotiation; ideology established boundaries of legitimacy; and changing strategic circumstances created incentives for accommodation. By comparing six carefully selected cases rather than claiming comprehensive coverage, the Special Issue identifies a common negotiating repertoire while preserving the historical specificity of each bilateral relationship.

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